

10 BEST SELF-CARE TECHNIQUES

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*Functional
Tips for
Healthy and
Pain Free
Living*

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Introduction

“A reasonable man adapts himself to the world. An unreasonable man persists on trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.”

-George Bernard Shaw, Maxims For Revolution

The human race has never seen such an explosion of perpetual visual stimulation combined with a physical and kinesthetic stagnation as many live today. It is a scary social experiment and we all have the opportunity to step outside of this dysfunctional laboratory. Our current state is a product of every past experience culminated into now. We are continually laying the bricks for the future structures we will inhabit.

Think of a creative stone mason laying each stone with care, intention and passion. Now come back to that same project one year later and take in the beauty of the structure. The art that ensued did not happen in a day or a week. It is the intentionality of every stone laid which eventually led to the awe inspiring, actualized vision of the mason.

This metaphor is happening every moment of our lives. We are continually laying the building blocks for our future selves. It is absolutely pertinent to choose a vision, break down the necessary steps to actualize and live every moment with intention toward progress. If we live every moment to the fullest of our ability, we are guaranteed daily progress which I would define as success.

1) Drink Enough Water with Electrolytes

We must take hydration seriously. When we are dehydrated, blood becomes more viscous and we actually have less available for circulation. Less blood equals compromised delivery of all essential nutrients in the body including oxygen. Drinking enough water supports our bodies by moving waste and is crucial to proper organ function. Imagine your body is like a river; a constant flow of clean water with a proper balance of minerals leading to a thriving, crystal clear utopia. Our bodies interact similarly and a resemblance can be observed in the path of rivers and streams comprising our own circulation system.



As far as tissue regulation goes, properly hydrated tissue permits tissue layers to slide in an aqueous environment. Imagine a car without enough oil, or the wrong oil for that matter; if the layers are stuck, our movement quality suffers, pain persists and we are complaining about a lack of energy or decreased performance. When cartilage in the joints is properly hydrated, we have smooth sliding surfaces instead of the grinding that afflicts so many. Granted, there is far more to tissue hydration than just drinking water, but without it, proper hydration is a lost cause.

Cellular communication and thermoregulation are crucial components to proper hydration as well. Without enough fluid in the system, our bodies work overtime seeking to maintain body temperature. This, in turn, puts us into a survival state and our body becomes stingy by retaining fluid in the muscles. We then feel weak, foggy and clunky.

Here's the key question... are our cells absorbing the water we are taking in? It's not enough to just drink water, we need a balance of electrolytes in and around our cells for proper function and fluid utilization. We should be drinking around 2 to 3 liters per day (depending on our activity level) and supplementing with either an electrolyte supplement or simple sea salt which is also available in iodized form. Just a pinch of salt (I like the pink Himalayan) contains 82 vital minerals often missing in our modern diet. Table salt is generally stripped of most minerals then, to make matters worse, unhealthy additives keep it from caking together. For a healthier body, go with the good stuff. You will feel and taste the difference.

Here are some pointers

- 2 to 3 liters per day, each with a pinch of salt or an electrolyte supplement unless you're drinking with food which already contains salt.
- Start each day with a large glass of water before you do anything else
- Don't drink too much especially when eating
- Drink spring water if accessible
- Peeing clear does not necessarily mean you are properly hydrated

2) Make Your Environment Fit Your Vision

A gold fish will grow to the size of its bowl in the same sense that a human will grow to fit their environment. This is a fundamental component of self-development. Have you ever noticed a really big person with crumby posture, as though he is shortening himself to fit the shorter man's world surrounding him? A healthier alternative would be to learn to fit our environment to our ideal selves. This goes the same for people with

whom we spend our time. It's been said, "we are the average of the five people we spend the most time with". Habits and traits rub off on us dependent on those with whom we coexist, so choose wisely.

Your physical environment is incredibly impactful to your development,

both physically and mentally. Ever get a sore back from hunching over a low kitchen counter while chopping veggies? In those moments, you are training your body to hunch. How about sitting at a desk and jutting your head forward to stare into the computer monitor?



Yep, this action is training forward head posture into your body and reshaping your whole body to compensate for your new pattern. If we are unconscious to the insidious, slow-drip impact of our environment, we will very likely receive an unpleasant surprise in the not so distant future. The moral of the story is to make your environment fit your ideal self and you will reap the glorious reward of growing into the best version of you.

Here are some tips

- Get a standing desk ASAP
- Create a room in your home with open space to move and play
- Place a pull-up bar in your home and office so every time you walk by you do a couple reps
- Have therapeutic tools around to work with yourself (foam roller, balls, etc)
- If possible, make your kitchen counters (any counter top for that matter) tall enough so you don't slouch over them

- Get a lumbar support for the car
- Practice maintaining a strong and stable body position in literally everything you do
- Find active friends, a dog or anything that will force you to move and play everyday
- Join or create a mastermind group to discuss ideas and inspire each other

3)Squat Every Day-Get out of the chair

A scarily high percentage of first world countries are unable to perform a functional squat. In my practice, I am surprised and impressed to find someone that can squat functionally all the way down. This is a product of sitting entirely too much and not taking the time to undue the damage of chairs each day. If you look at children or folks in countries that are not so chair dependent; they squat and generally move quite well!



‘ According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, more than 285,000 total hip replacements are performed each year in the United States.’

This number is staggering and absolutely can be prevented. The old adage “if you don't use it, you will lose it” is the root of our problem.

Here is a daily routine to save you pain and, potentially, the cost of hip replacement later in life.

- Start every morning with 5-10 deep squats before breakfast
- Get off the treadmill and run outside for at least 5 minutes as many times a day as you can.

- Implement jumping rope into your workout
- Foam roll your hips before bed

4) Replace afternoon caffeine with exercise

How often do we feel drained midway through the day and throw down another coffee or energy drink to keep moving. The artificial stimulus we crave from caffeine can be replaced with exercise. The body craves movement and it rewards us dually with “feel good” neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine when we give it what it is yearning for. Not only that, but exercise strengthens our brain's connection to our bodies, which creates a snowball effect that can lead to speaking with more confidence. In-



deed, movement is the fountain of youth, even our skin greatly benefits from the increase of circulation. And, who doesn't want to look and feel younger than their actual age?

Communication consists of a small percentage of the spoken word. The rest is from body language and tone. **If we are feeling “stuck” in our bodies, it will absolutely manifest in how we carry and express ourselves.** This, in turn, can influence people's perception of us and their level of trust. In business situations or those first impression moments that are so crucial to developing relationships, how you feel in your body and mind is invaluable.

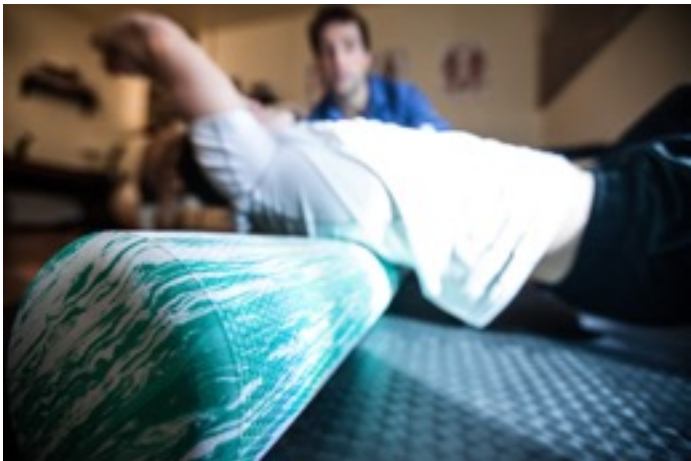
Let's present our selves with organic energy and well integrated body/minds to maintain that fire for the rest of our lives. **Artificial energy drinks are built to break our body's ability to create its own natural production of energy.**

Here's an example of a 15 minute energy booster routine. It will take less time than walking to the local coffee shop!

- 10 burpees
- back bends
- 10 over-head lunges
- Walk, jog and run outside for 10 minutes
- Take 10 deep breaths with a big open chest, smile and envision your ideal self as though it is already you. Keep this up and that is whom you will become!

5)Get a Foam Roller and Myofascial Balls

Do you love treating yourself to a massage? How about a free massage every day for the rest of your life? If you don't already have self-care tools, it's never too late to



start. The foam roller is an easy way to keep tissue hydrated and relax your mind and body within minutes. Slow, deep tissue pressure has been shown to reduce sympathetic nervous system response, which translates to feeling mentally and physically relaxed. We need to have self care tools on the ready if we want to ac-

tually implement them into our day. So, I would suggest placing them in common places. Even a few minutes of this stimulation will start to bring you results.

Researchers at the University of Miami Touch Research Institute discovered that slow, moderate pressure stimulates a cranial nerve that lowers blood pressure and slows the heart rate.

Foam rolling and myofascial balls assist in breaking down scar tissue which will impede your healing and overall movement quality. Think of your tissue like a knitted sweater. If you tug on a single thread, it will deform the shape of the whole sweater. This is comparable to the impact scar tissue has on our fascial web. Think of our body as being completely connected instead of 640 separate muscles. View it as one beautiful muscle separated by 640 pockets to allow for a full range of motion. If there is something happening anywhere in your body, it is happening everywhere and we have to continually take care of every piece of the whole.

You can use the roller or balls to find points in your body which feel gunky, tender or stiff. Once you have located these areas, you can rest your weight into the tool until you feel tissue change. It should take approximately 15-30 seconds for tissue change to occur. To help ease the troubled area, you can explore various ranges of motion with your limbs, torso or neck. The key is slow, intentional movement. Think exploration instead of gross clumsy movements. Utilize the myofascial ball to separate muscle fibers. Do this by slowly rolling them longitudinally between muscle bellies which will separate them and allow freedom of the sliding surfaces. Use the ball the same way you would the roller.



6) Abandon Repetitive Movement

Our bodies thrive on adaptation. It is our responsibility to challenge our systems on a daily basis if we want them to serve us into old age. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), repetitive stress injuries are the most common occupational injury. We spend over \$20 billion per year in workers compensation! This is absolutely preventable with the right education and willingness to break the standard, stagnant mold. We need to move continually in order to keep the sliding surfaces in our tissues from becoming “glued” together.



Our tissues are continually being broken down and reconstructed by fibroblast cells. The model they follow to recreate our tissue is dependent upon the information you provide with your physical movement. **We are literally forming to whatever we**



do! It is absolutely mandatory we choose our movements wisely and recognize we are laying the foundation for our future selves.

Try to introduce moving your body in a creative way at least once every 20 minutes for at least one minute. I'm asking for just three to five minutes per hour (at least) which will lead to keeping your tissues sliding and strengthen a neuromuscular connection in your body; neuromuscular, meaning the link of your brain

and body which happens to be the main determinant of athleticism. We generally don't need more muscle to perform most activities. It is the actual recruitment of muscle fibers which happens when we challenge ourselves in movement. Think “muscle memory”. If we predominantly sit or stand in place, we dumb our system down and are closing the roads of information in our bodies. Consequently, it takes work to open them back up.

7) Play Every Day and Connect with Others (Dance)

The lives of many in our culture are becoming overwhelmingly linear and structured. **The body is a fluid system which thrives on variation and complexity of movement.** The average American spends their time sitting at a desk, driving in a car and then taking a load off on the couch. If the gym is a part of the day, likely the movements performed are equally basic and linear. This lifestyle is destroying the incredible potential of human expression we are meant to possess.



Let's break the modern mold and start playing again. Music with Dance is a phenomenal medium of self expression, coordination and exploration of our body's full range of motion. It has been shown to develop mental cognition and brain/body connection. Dance has proven to be helpful in the prevention of dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. Harvard Medical School psychiatrist Dr. Joseph Coyle Explains "The cerebral cortex and hippocampus, which are critical to these activities, are remarkably plastic, and they re-wire themselves based upon their use."

The body and mind is plastic, meaning it will change to fit the environment in which it's exposed. Do yourself a favor and offer your systems complex movement and a fresh challenge every single day.

Human connection is something we are losing by burying our face in our cell phone. Watch two dogs meet each other for the first time and you will see what our primal selves are begging for. You want me to sniff whaaat ???? Thanks, but I'll stick with shaking hands!

'Extensive research by the University of Miami's Touch Research Institute has revealed that human touch has wide-ranging physical and emotional benefits for people of all ages. The Institute's experiments showed that touch lessened pain, improved pulmonary function, increased growth in infants, lowered blood glucose and improved immune function. Human touch is important for all ages, but by the time children reach their teen years, they receive only half as much touching as they did in the early part of their lives. Adults touch each other even less.'

If dancing is not your thing, try to find team activities that challenge your mind and body while connecting with others at the same time. An activity that necessitates a variety of ranges of motion is ideal. This is an effective usage of your workout time and feeds the need of human connection.

8)Meditate - Gratitude, Power, Creation

How many of us feel as though our mind is constantly spinning out of control and we are simply along for the ride? Mindfulness is an acquired trait. It takes intention and practice just like any other skill. It takes just a small amount of time each day and the results can be phenomenally life changing.



If life is happening on auto-pilot, it is highly likely we will end up old and contrite because we didn't dig in to our lives sufficiently. **We need to view each moment as an opportunity to experience ourselves and this life to its fullest potential.** When we watch a child play with dirt for the first time, it is though he or she is discovering the cure for cancer. Many of

us have become jaded to the magic in every moment. This is the death of creativity and organic stimulation.

Firstly, we need to recognize that meditating does not mean you need to travel to India, grow a wiley beard and spend 6 months reflecting in a cave. It also does not mean you have to drive a Prius, eat spirulina with every meal and get a "namaste" tattoo on your forearm. It can be as simple as observing yourself cooking your eggs in the morning as opposed to throwing food and coffee down the gullet and charging to work as though you're being chased by a bull. Mindfulness, gratitude and meditation is medicine for getting this fire back in experiencing our lives to fullest. It is for everyone.

Look at life as a road-trip and meditation as your GPS. If we set out on a journey with no map or idea as to where we want to go, we will absolutely arrive somewhere.

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.”

“I don't much care where... said Alice”

“Then it doesn't matter which way you go... said the Cat”

-Lewis Carrol, Alice in Wonderland

If we do not define exactly what we are creating and the steps we will follow to achieve them, we will be throwing darts with our eyes closed. Think of meditation as an opportunity to clear your drawing board, reenergize yourself and reinforce exactly what you want to build.

This is a brief guide you can use as an option for developing more intention in your life.

Start with this example 10 minute session!

- 1) Find a comfortable upright sitting position. I prefer either sitting on my knees or lotus position from yoga with a pillow under my butt to keep the pelvis tilted forward and sit bones spread wide to open the pelvic floor.
- 2) Start by taking just 1 minute and take 5 deep breaths. Try to find that breath in your chest, belly and back. Eventually, explore feeling the breath connect with your head, neck and pelvic floor. For 3 minutes, focus on what you are grateful for in your life and nothing else.

Simple, right?

- 3) Next, for another 3 minutes find a strong upright “winning” position for your body. Focus on finding power, strength and perseverance in your body. Imagine you just ran through the finish line and won an Olympic gold medal.
- 4) Lastly, for 3 minutes bring your focus to making your dreams a reality in your mind. Whatever it is you want, make that a present day reality in your mind.

9) Stop Using Exercise Machines

Our bodies are built to stabilize from innumerable ranges of motion. We develop based upon the movements we expose ourselves to. If we take away stability from our daily exercise or general lifestyle, we will absolutely pay for it. Always remembering to ask yourself, **"What am I training for?"** If it is valuable in your life to



be exceptional at isolating one small muscle group, while the rest of the body is 'out for lunch', than perhaps doing lots of bench press and machine military presses are exactly what you need. For the other 99.9% of the population, we should focus on movements relevant to making us better at life.

Any monkey can break a system down but it takes intention and dedication to put it back together. Simple movements (such as a preacher curl) void of stabilization are fairly mindless and disintegrating. How often to you meet a 'jacked' body builder who also moves gracefully and excels in athletics? I'm not saying it doesn't exist, but it is inarguably rare. Muscular bodies lacking grace are the consequence of breaking the body down as though it's a Lego set instead of the fluid, dynamic system it is. The integrated whole is truly more powerful than the sum of its parts.

The only exercises worth your time (unless you are specifically rehabbing selective tissues) are full body, compound movements. Examples of this are squats, deadlifts, lunges, jumping, running, pull-ups, push-ups, all using bodyweight or free-weights. It is certainly a blow to the ego to go from leg-pressing 300 lbs. to front-squatting 95

lbs., but your body will thank you when you're 100 years old and still moving like a spry athlete.

Here are some helpful alternatives to machines and isolated exercises...

See Align Therapy YouTube page for detailed video tutorials

www.youtube.com/user/AlignFit

- Bicep curls-Pull-ups instead
- Tricep extensions-Narrow grip push-ups
- Machine shoulder press-Standing dumbbell press and eventually handstand press if possible
- Ab crunch machine-Hanging Leg Raises
- Leg press-Front squats as low as possible with good form
- Machine knee-extensions-lunges with or without free-weights
- Calf Raises-Jumping drills

10) Turn Off the TV and Facebook in the Bedroom

The average American spends 40 minutes per day on Facebook. That equates to over 10 days each year spent scrolling through random photos of cute cats. Time is our most valuable commodity. It is very easy to let it slip away if we don't pay attention.

Small daily investments in ourselves such as exercise, meditation, business development, practicing an instrument or developing a new skill will add up by compounding into something we can take great pride in and share with the world. Albert Einstein said "Compound interest is the eighth wonder of the world. He who understands it, earns it ...

he who doesn't ... pays it.” I know, the cats are cute, but let’s think about the long term, cumulative impact of our momentary decisions.

Progress is the most rewarding feeling in world and spending too much time “killing” time in front of the TV or social media will lead to *stagnation*, which is one definition of depression. Our society has become literally addicted to the dopamine signals our brain sends when we receive a “notification” on Facebook. This response in the



brain is comparable to that of a person addicted to cocaine. It is the less apparent addictions in our society such as social media and pharmaceuticals which can be the most insidious.

Put the computer away at least 1.5 hours before you go to bed.

- Set defined time parameters for your time on social media and TV
- Implement at least one day a week “unplugged”; i.e., days where you don't use either
- Be selective about your social media mediums. Time spent on Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and other social media can develop personal as well as professional relationships if used properly, however, many of us are spending entirely too much time communicating on social media.
- Try a 10 day social media/TV fast and replace the time spent with reading, writing and spending time playing with others instead of burying your face in your computer.

Steve Jobs said, “just make something”.

There is no static state in life. We are constantly progressing or digressing. It is the level of engagement with the moment which determines the direction of our development. This is reflected in art forms and any other medium of creation. I would like to challenge everyone to be the mason of their own masterpiece..... starting NOW!.

Resources:

- <http://www.livestrong.com/article/186495-importance-of-human-touch/>
- orthoinfo.aaos.org/topic.cfm?topic=a00377